



### Official Safety Statement of the Montana Renewable Energy Association (MREA)

The Montana Renewable Energy Association is dedicated to expanding the use of renewable energy across the state of Montana. Greater adoption of renewable energy technologies by the public requires a well-trained workforce; without trained individuals using best practices in the field to produce code-compliant installations, renewable energy systems are bound to perform poorly and/or become a hazard to the property and its occupants. Of equal importance is the need for this workforce to comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) safety regulations for the construction industry. Non-compliance with OSHA safety standards on the jobsite can result in business-ending fines, life-altering injuries, and even death – all of which represent a step backward for the renewable energy industry and the broader adoption of its technologies. For these reasons, in late 2007 the MREA created a Safety Committee, and its first accomplishment was to establish a strategic partnership with local OSHA officials in order to provide MREA members with the best information on safety available for the development of their internal safety programs. Additionally, in conjunction with NorthWestern Energy officials, the MREA Safety Committee worked to establish an annual series of safety trainings held at various locations around the state, free of charge and open to all Montana renewable energy installers.

Vested in safety as the MREA is, the organization and its Board of Directors expects each of its member companies to seek regular safety training in the areas of the four major occupational hazards as defined by OSHA: falls, electrical shock, caught-by/in-between, and struck-by hazards. First aid and CPR training is also expected of MREA member companies so that they are fully prepared to respond to an accident. Further, the MREA and its Board of Directors expects all of its member companies to comply with OSHA safety standards and regulations while performing work in the field, which includes the use of OSHA-certified personal protective equipment such as roof anchors, ropes, and harnesses for fall protection and gloves and eyewear for protection from electrical shocks and arc-flash burns.

Lastly, since MREA member companies are expected to represent the organization as one that is committed to safety by complying with OSHA safety standards in the field, it follows that MREA members are to publish only OSHA-compliant installation photographs to the web, newspapers, magazines, and other public media. It is of critical importance to the MREA and its Board of Directors that the public perception of MREA member companies is one of great respect for their commitment to excellence not only in the areas of work quality and customer service, but also, and most importantly, safety.

Should member companies or their employees demonstrate non-compliance with this Safety Statement, they may receive a written warning from the organization's Board of Directors. Continued acts of non-compliance by a member company may lead the Board of Directors to revoke its membership, as authorized by the bylaws of the organization.

Adopted September 27, 2012 by the MREA Board of Directors

Conor Darby, President  
Ben Reed, Vice President  
Dave Ryan, Secretary  
Patrick Judge, Treasurer  
Christopher Borton

Henry Dykema  
Rip Hamilton  
Kyla Maki  
Kathi Montgomery

***SUNDANCE SOLAR SYSTEMS LLC***

***67 Vernetti Road  
Red Lodge, MT 59068  
406/425-1153***

February 8, 2013

Montana Senate Energy Committee  
Room 317  
Montana State Capital  
Helena, MT 59604

Dear Montana Senate Energy Committee:

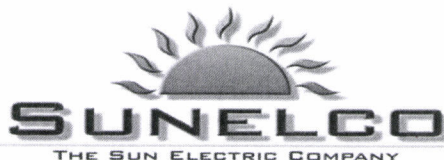
I am writing to urge you to support SB247 and update the parameters of the Montana net-metering laws. The Montana net-metering law was passed almost unanimously in 1999 yet has not been revised despite the rapid and substantial changes and developments in the renewable energy field and technology. The costs associated with installing net-metered photovoltaic systems has come down sharply and as a result creates an environment conducive to the development of larger systems. The 50 kW cap significantly limits the ability of possible investors to take advantage of the economy of scale and contribute to the growing renewable energy industry in Montana. Adapting this law to the modern environment will stimulate job growth and foster a healthy development of diverse and clean energy sources for Montana. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

Henry Dykema  
Sundance Solar Systems



2086 US Hwy. 93 North  
Suite 130  
Victor, MT 59875



406/642/6422  
800/338-6844  
Fax 406/542-9768

Dear Senators and Senate Energy Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to address this committee in support of SB247 concerning the expansion of the cap on grid tied solar installations into Northwestern Energy's power grid and how excess power generation from solar and small wind installations is handled.

My company, Sunelco, Inc, an acronym for the Sun Electric Company has been in continuous operation in the Bitterroot Valley for over 28 years. We have seen a lot of changes in the solar industry in those years. We have also seen a lot of change in the demographics of those who want solar electric systems.

For many years solar was the sole domain of off grid dwellers and reclusives who were out of the mainstream of modern society. However today it is not uncommon to see fairly large solar arrays on suburban roofs and lawns, schools and hospitals, apartments and businesses all over Montana. Wind generators are more popular today with ranchers and rural homeowners than ever before. It is a fact not lost on the public that the sun comes up every morning and in many places in Montana the wind blows 24 hours a day. It only makes sense to put these resources to work at a useful task. Equipment costs to capture and feed this clean and quiet power into the grid have fallen significantly in the last 3 years to the point where dollar per watt it is very close to parity with power purchased from Northwestern Energy and the Rural Electrical Cooperatives.

However, as we progress into the 21<sup>st</sup> century we anticipate the need for more and more electricity to feed our homes and workplaces and the demand for renewable energy will increase right along with that demand.

Currently, the cap on a solar electric or wind installations in Montana is 50 Kw peak power per installation. In order to install a system such as the 85 Kw currently being installed at Missoula's new parking garage **the owners are required to purchase multiple meters and feed two separate service entrances.** Forty two other states have already raised their caps to 100 Kw or higher without any negative effects or cost to the consumers. Passage of this bill would not cost the state anything and no additional revenues need be raised to implement it.

By raising the limit, the law would allow larger solar and wind installations to be brought on line around the state. These installations provide jobs and training for graduates of our colleges and universities where energy technology is a popular major.

In addition SB 247 will bring added benefits to consumers who have purchased renewable energy packages for their home by allowing them to carry excess power credits over from year to year or share them with neighbors or deduct them from another account they own.

By passing SB 247 into law we open the doors for growth of the solar and small wind industry and all of the advantages it brings to Montana and its citizens. Sunelco currently employs 5 full time employees and we frequently partner with another solar electric company from Ronan which hires another 5 people. There are approximately 50 more companies similar to ours in Montana working hard to design and install renewable energy systems. SB 247 is a win-win prospect for us, our customers and the Great State of Montana.

Respectfully,

Tom Bishop, President  
Sunelco, Inc



February 11, 2013

Senate Energy & Telecommunications Committee  
Montana 63<sup>rd</sup> Legislature  
Alan Olson, Chair

Dear Senator Olson and committee members:

Please accept this letter in lieu of my personal testimony on SB247. Homeword is committed to providing safe, healthy, affordable housing using sustainable methods and promoting strong communities through housing counseling and education for those most in need. We've developed affordable housing with sustainability in mind for 18 years across the state of Montana. We concentrate on energy conservation via the building envelope through added insulation, good quality windows and doors, building orientation and Energy Star rated appliances. If the project budget allows it, we include solar array installation which we've done on five (5) of the nine (9) multi-family properties under our ownership and a 10<sup>th</sup> being completed now. We build with sustainability in mind for conservation reasons as well as for financial benefit to our low income residents.

We support SB247 because it allows more flexibility for building owners and creates more opportunity for investment in Montana. We support increasing the current size cap of 50Kw on net metered projects to 100Kw. It will allow the alternative energy industry to grow in Montana; it'll allow us to explore new markets and increasing the cap will encourage larger institutions to install a larger solar array system. It makes economic sense for the consumer.

SB247 would also allow the net meter customer to keep the credits earned throughout the year; rather than have them forfeited as it stands now. Allowing credits to roll over will encourage more people to invest in solar or other alternative energies that are metered. This is really a matter of fairness.

Lastly, SB247 allows the transfer of credits via the utilities accounting department rather than needing to install spendy infrastructure. It's reasonable to allow the transfer of credits to buildings with the same owner or adjacent property. An example that could benefit Homeword is a two building site in Missoula where we have one 35 unit building and another 34 unit building (includes commercial). Both currently have solar arrays and this bill would allow us as owners the flexibility to "share" the benefit between the two buildings.

We're in a crucial time in our history in terms of energy consumption and production. Let's work together to conserve energy, reduce load demand requirements on existing utilities and delay developing costly energy generation plants that contribute to our carbon footprint. This is the low hanging fruit. This kind of flexibility in our laws will encourage Montana to be even more self-sufficient.

Thank you for your consideration of this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Andrea Davis  
Executive Director



For SB 247 to increase the net-metering cap to 100kW

This is to urge you to vote for SB 247. We were perhaps the first people in the state to install what was at that time a "commercial-grade" wind turbine on the family ranch east of Livingston in 1984. Since the ranch is divided between MPC/NWE and Park Coop, and most of the electrical use is on the latter, we weren't able to net-meter it. It would have made a significant economic difference if we had been able to do so.

Three points for your consideration:

1. A 100kW cap represents a compromise, it is much lower than other states, Oregon's 1mW for example, and it doesn't open the door to large-scale development. The fact of the matter is that turbines rated 100kW produce only, and at best, around 35% of that total. Typical farms or ranches, many of them (like ours) with sprinkler systems, can use all of it on a net-metered basis. Good turbines < 50 kW are considerably more expensive per installed kilowatt than 100kW turbines, and for that reason in very limited use.
2. Historically, many individual Montana farms and ranches produced their own electricity in the 20's, 30's, and 40s. The Jacobs brothers from Wolf Point made and marketed some 35,000 machines which were deployed here and across the Upper Great Plains. They gave the people who owned them a measure of independence and control. That opportunity, for people in and out of agriculture, should be encouraged.
3. Although there will not be an avalanche of new renewable energy systems as the result of raising the net-metering cap from 50kW to 100kW, it will increase the amount of distributed generation in Montana, and take at least some pressure off high-voltage transmission lines which are in some case already at or near their capacity limits.

In short, there are solid reasons for increasing the net-metering cap, and I really don't know of any viable reasons against doing so. In particular, utilities and co-ops will not be harmed. Indeed, and without getting into any of the technical details, I think it will be easier for them to stabilize voltage levels and manage loads when more electricity is net-metered.

Sincerely,

Gordon "Corky" Brittan  
215 Mission Creek Road  
Livingston, MT 59047

Edward May <ed.may.rem@gmail.com>

Dear Senator,

Today, I write you to ask for your "YES" vote on Senate Bill 247, in support of a friendlier renewable energized Montana. I understand that the vote comes to the floor on Tuesday, February 12th.

Your support of this bill will help to align Montana with a large majority of other states in the Union that demonstrate positive support for advancing renewable energies for households and businesses across our nation.

Many positive impacts will be felt, not in the least - increased employment in our industry. I own a small company that designs and installs solar and wind power systems for farmers, ranchers, and homeowners in south-central Montana. My success has been limited for a few reasons, and one is that the system limits for size is too restrictive at 50KW.

My prospects express concern when I tell them that each year their net-metering credits would be lost to the power company as the program "resets". Additionally, farmers and ranchers commonly have more than one meter on their property, but they cannot "share" credits between all the meters. This significantly reduces their motivation and in many cases, with my prospects, has killed the deal.

Passage of SB 247 will significantly impact our industry in a positive way, and I ask that you aggressively work to convince all of your colleagues in the senate to support SB 247. It makes good sense to encourage a cleaner environment for our future.

Best regards,

**Edward May**, Owner

**R**enewable **E**nergy **M**anagement, LLC

Ph 406-780-1173

[www.rem-sun-wind.com](http://www.rem-sun-wind.com)

1074 Springtime Rd.

Reed Point, Montana 59069